DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 076 558 SP 006 489

TITLE	Accountability and the Teacher.
INSTITUTION	National Education Association, Washington, D.C. Div. of Instruction and Professional Development.
PUB DATE	Jan 73
NOTE	4p.; Briefing Memo, number 1, January, 1973
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Cost Effectiveness; *Educational Accountability; *Educational Responsibility; Governance; *School Responsibility; Teacher Dismissal; *Teacher Evaluation; *Teacher Responsibility

ABSTRACT

Teachers should, and would, be held accountable for learning outcomes if those outcomes were assessed on a broader base than the mere testing of students. Instruction and Professional Development of the National Education Association suggests that at least six elements (established goals, students regularly assessed, varied and individualized programs, established staff criteria, abundant resources, and the nature of governance) be considered when attempting to assess learning outcomes. Teachers can prevent unfair enactment of accountability laws by such actions as identifying the responsibility of other groups in education and by seeing that accountability measures become state department regulations. There is a legitimate case to be made for greater accountability in education, but not if it is directed towards the reduction of educational expenditure regardless of the cost in human resources. (A listing of further information is included. Related document is SP 006 490.) (JA)

ED 076558

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Briefing MEMO ipod

INSTRUCTION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

JANUARY, 1973 • NO. 1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE TEACHER

"The general public and their legislative representatives are asking that educators account for what they are doing. The request is reasonable and the profession has an obligation to answer. The answer cannot be limited to just interpreting the results of student performance and laying the total responsibility on teachers. There are too many factors affecting what students do in school to permit the present simplistic accountability measures to be accepted. The NEA must see to it that complete, not partial, accountability takes place."

With this statement the NEA Executive Committee earlier this year called for an action program that would "develop accountability measures to assess performance at every level of decision-making within school programs." For news about this developing program, watch NEA publications.

Who Is Accountable For What?

The confusion surrounding education is pervasive. Substitutes for public schools are being demanded. Resources for education at all levels are being curtailed. And possibly most dangerous of all, a new panacea has been discovered. It is called accountability. What is meant by this term varies with the user. To some, it means paying teachers according to student achievement as measured by test scores; to others, it means the end of permissiveness in schools and colleges. To one high official, it means we'll give you more money when you prove you can do better with what you already have. Obviously, educators must be accountable for something, but for what and to whom at varying levels and areas of education requires our attention. Surely the time has never been more appropriate for a rethinking of the means and ends of our educational system (systems) in the United States. Nothing less than civilization may be at stake. Who is accountable for what? (D. D. Darland. "Accountable For What?" Journal of Teacher Education, Winter 1970.)

If one looks in a dictionary for "accountability," he will find "responsibility." To hold teachers accountable, then, is to hold them responsible. But responsible for what? Undoubtedly it would be of advantage to teachers to have their services assessed in order that their strengths might be recognized and rewarded and their weaknesses discovered and corrected. But unfortunately, the concept of accountability as it is presently being developed is not of this type. In most cases, it is based on an oversimplified evaluation system that attempts

SP 006 489

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

to assess a teacher's professional skill by testing students to ascertain what they may or may not have learned. This approach completely divorces a teacher's performance from the constraints of the educational system within which he is obliged to operate.

The focus of much state legislation on teacher evaluation is to raise the quality of education by weeding out unfit and incompetent teachers. In reality, however, it is often merely a red herring drawn across the trail of such ulterior motives as power plays, tax manipulation, and the wooing of big business. Although in some instances there is an honest intent to raise the level of educational programs, most of the time the welfare of student and teacher receives scant attention.

It is difficult to quarrel with the idea of accountability per se. Teachers, along with other professionals, should--and undoubtedly would--be only too glad to be held accountable for learning outcomes, provided that those outcomes are assessed on a broader base than the mere testing of students. An information package recently developed for Association leaders by Instruction and Professional Development, NEA, suggests that at least six elements (goals, students, program, staff, resources, and governance) should be considered when attempting to assess learning outcomes:

1. Educational goals and objectives should be established and made public at both local and state levels, and adequate funds should be made available to realize those goals.

2. Students should be assessed regularly on both cognitive and affective skills, achievement, intelligence, aptitude, demographic data, talents, etc.

3. The school program should be both varied and individualized in order to fit the needs of students differing widely in skills and intelligence. Students, parents, and teachers should be involved in developing the program, which should be assessed regularly against set goals and objectives.

4. Staff should be selected by the school administrator according to established criteria, upon the recommendation of other staff, parents, and students. New staff should receive assistance while they are being oriented to their jobs, and they should be evaluated several times during the probationary period in order to determine their suitability for permanent assignment. All staff should be evaluated regularly according to publicly agreed-upon standards. Inservice education designed to help teachers increase their teaching effectiveness should be provided.

5. Resources should include a variety of printed material readily available to both teachers and students. There should also be films, filmstrips, videotapes, and the necessary facilities for viewing them. A proper physical plant should be provided, and the budget should be sufficient to cover all necessary expenses. Community resources, both people and places, should be identified and utilized.

6. Governance. The rights and responsibilities of teachers and students should be defined, and a system of checks and balances created to ensure that they are put into effect. There should be a statement (developed by students and teachers) on academic freedom. The school board, faculty, and administration should have an agreement regarding their respective spheres of influence, power, and decision making and a defined procedure for arriving at decisions when the agreements are subject to various interpretations.

   State boards and commissions, with a majority membership of practicing teachers, should be established by law or by the state board to regulate preparation and licensure of teachers, monitor inservice practice, approve inservice education, and provide due process for cases of alleged malpractice and unethical behavior. State legislation should exist to sanction negotiations for policies and agreements at the local level on goal setting, students, program, staff, resources, and governance. There should be state legislation enabling reciprocity with all states in the certification of teachers.

A Call for Action

What can teachers do to prevent the enactment of unfair accountability laws and ensure the establishment of more equitable measures?

1. They should ensure that the responsibility of various groups--boards of education, administrators, teachers, parents, and students--is identified so that accountability can be appropriately assessed.

2. If accountability measures are to be adopted, teachers can work to have them take the form of state department regulations, which are more adaptable than legislation and easier to change and modify as new circumstances arise.

3. They can attempt to expose the ulterior motives often hidden beneath the cloak of accountability: coercion, control, and budget slashing.

4. The united teaching profession can work to prevent public thinking on education from becoming polarized: on the one side, those who urge systematization and standardization; on the other, those who stand for humanization and greater openness. Legislation should never be used to establish a single persuasion of educational thought.

5. Teachers should strive to be recognized and accepted as the source of authority and decision making in curriculum and instruction.

6. Teachers, through their association, can take appropriate collective action in response to the implementation of ill-advised accountability measures.

There is a legitimate case to be made for greater accountability in education. Both educators and taxpayers want to be sure that manpower and materials are being expended to achieve the goals for which they have been allocated. They want to make sure that every child is educated to the extent of his ability in order that the society of which he is a part may benefit accordingly.

The NEA could unreservedly endorse such a concept of accountability and pledge its full support to making it workable. But the Association can neither endorse nor support many current moves toward accountability--moves that are directed, not toward the improvement of education, but toward the reduction of educational expenditure regardless of the cost in human resources.

For More Information on Accountability

Cooperative Accountability Project, a 7-state, 3-year project begun in 1972, represents an important source of information. Write to: Arthur R. Olson, CAP Project Director, Colorado Department of Education, 1362 Lincoln Street, Denver, Colorado 80203.

State Educational Accountability Repository, a program of CAP. "The purpose of SEAR is to provide state and local education agency personnel and interested persons with access to a central source of materials and reports regarding practices and procedures for developing and implementing accountability and/or assessment programs." Write to: Jack G. Schmidt, SEAR Director, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 126 Langdon Street, Madison, Wisconsin 53702.

Phi Delta Kappan, October 1972, includes a series of informative articles on accountability. Available from the publisher ($1.00), 8th and Union, Box 789, Bloomington, Indiana 47401.

Lessinger, Leon M. Every Kid A Winner: Accountability in Education. New York: Simon and Schuster 1970. 239 pp. $7.95. By a founder of the "accountability movement" in education, this book outlines in some detail the steps schools to take the initiative in attacking education problems.

An Annotated Bibliography on Accountability in Education. 1973. Available without charge from IPD/NEA. (See box below.)

This *Briefing Memo* is a response to requests from members for information on the above topic. It has been prepared by the Instruction and Professional Development staff of the National Education Association as a brief but accurate introduction to this topic for busy teachers and as a resource for readers who wish to pursue the subject in more detail. Except where indicated, the views expressed here do not represent official Association policy. This document has not been copyrighted and permission is granted herewith to members of the United Teaching Profession who may reproduce it in full or in part for non-commercial use provided credit is given to the NEA.

For information on other *Briefing Memo* topics, write or call the Information Center, Instruction and Professional Development, National Education Association, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. 20036. Phone: (202) 833-4337.